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"Where do we go from Wyhl?" Transnational Anti-Nuclear Protest targeting European and International Organizations in the 1970s

Jan-Henrik Meyer*

Abstract: »"Wyhl und was nun?" Transnationaler Protest gegen die Atompolitik europäischer und internationaler Organisationen in den 1970er Jahren«. While the site occupation at Wyhl in 1975 is usually considered the symbolic birthplace of the West German anti-nuclear movement, it may also serve as the starting point for a transnational history of anti-nuclear protest. Local cross-border cooperation among protesters at Wyhl deeply impressed those anti-nuclear activists in the mid-1970s who considered nuclear power a global problem and encouraged them to take their protest to the international level. The central argument of this article is that protest directed against international organizations (IOs) – notably the European Communities (EC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) provided a crucial catalyst for transnational cooperation among anti-nuclear activists. Targeting IOs as the key promoters of nuclear power on a global scale, anti-nuclear activists cooperated across borders organizing protest events. Their goal was to challenge the IOs and win back the public on the issue across borders. Based on multi-archival research, this article analyzes five transnational protest events between 1975 and 1978 in Western Europe. Findings suggest that continued cooperation led to the emergence of a transnational anti-nuclear network and facilitated transnational transfers of scientific expertise and protest practices.

Keywords: Anti-nuclear movement, transnational, International organizations, European Communities (EC), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

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1. Introduction: "Where do we go from Wyhl?"¹

The attempts here in Europe to hold a true transnational moratorium [on nuclear power, JHM] are still few – we have many ecology-minded people and groups – but all isolated from each other and all without direction as to where to take the protest.²

In a handwritten letter of 2 January 1975, Petra Karin Kelly, at the time an official with the European Communities' (EC) Economic and Social Committee (SEC) and an increasingly well-connected transnational activist against nuclear power, complained to John W. Gofman about what she perceived as the core deficiencies of the "ecological groups" in Europe at the time. Gofman, professor of medical physics at Berkeley, had done groundbreaking research on the carcinogenic effects of low-level radiation. Since 1969/70, he had become one of the most prominent critics of nuclear energy in the United States (US) (Semendeferi 2008). He was chairman of the "Committee for Nuclear Responsibility" and "father of the US moratorium", namely the campaign to stop the construction of new nuclear power plants, as Kelly's handwritten note on one of his letters read.³ Kelly deplored the fact that in Europe, the activists were all "isolated from each other". What seemed even more important to her, however, was the fact they were not even sure about their adversary: which was the relevant level of government, which was the authority in charge that protesters could address concerning nuclear energy on a continental scale?⁴

Kelly suggested two options as to whom to target: the first was her own employer, the EC. The forerunner of the present-day European Union (EU) included the European Economic Community (EEC), the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), but also the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom). Since the latter institution had been founded in 1956 specifically to promote this new form of energy in Western Europe, it was hardly surprising that Kelly found the Brussels institutions to be entirely committed to "a policy

¹ Leinen 1976, 2: "Wyhl und was dann...? (my translation, JHM)." The arguments outlined in this article were first developed and discussed in the context of a series of panels on "Anti-nuclear-protest in the 1970s and 1980s in a transnational perspective: Europe and beyond" at the Seventh Biennial Conference of the European Society for Environmental History in Munich in August 2013 that I organized with Astrid M. Kirchhof. I would like to thank Michael Schüring and Frank Zelko for their helpful comments, and Stephen Milder, Michael L. Hughes and my co-editor Astrid M. Kirchhof for the thoughtful discussion about these issues. Research for this article was funded by a Marie-Curie-Reintegration Grant of the European Community, by the Danish Research Council for Culture and Communication and by a fellowship of the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society at LMU Munich.

² Kelly, Petra to John W. Gofman, Brussels, 2 January 1975. *Archiv Grünes Gedächtnis (AGG)* Petra Kelly Archiv (PKA) 2119.

³ Gofman, John to Petra Kelly, 10 July 1975, *AGG* PKA 2119.

⁴ Kelly, Petra to John W. Gofman, Brussels, 2 January 1975. *AGG* PKA 2119.

of support for the nuclear industry". The EC simply refused "to discuss in full and open all the consequences of such a policy".

Secondly, she proposed taking the protest to the level of international organizations and bodies, including the various international conferences of nuclear experts and industry, where the advocates of nuclear energy gathered, such as at the "European Nuclear Energy Maturity" in Paris and the "Reaktortagung" in Nuremberg in the spring of 1975 (Tansey 1975). Together with former European Commissioner for agriculture Sicco Mansholt, with whom she was in a private liaison at the time, she was planning to hold "counter conferences 'against'" these meetings. Impressed by the report of the Club of Rome (Meadows et al. 1972), Mansholt had recently turned environmentalist and nuclear critic (Mansholt 1972, 1975; Merriënboer 2011; Scichilone 2009). Kelly invited Gofman as "one of those fighting, in the foreground in America" to attend one of the events she was planning to organize and "to join our discussions and [...] share their experiences with European comrades".⁵

Kelly's letter illustrates three aspects that are at the core of this article: First, while anti-nuclear protest in the 1970s and 1980s was mostly a local affair – including not-in-my-backyard-(NIMBY)-style activities directed at concrete power plants, at least some anti-nuclear activists perceived the issue of nuclear power as a European and international problem. Notably since "transnationally organized nuclear big capital" dominated the "European public sphere", transnational action and cooperation seemed indispensable. Transferring knowledge across national borders, learning from experts and experience from elsewhere and informing the public seemed of crucial importance. The goal was to "politicize" the problem and take it to a higher, international level.⁶

Secondly, even to those who deemed transnational cooperation necessary, it was initially far from clear which higher political level should be targeted as the appropriate and most effective one. Kelly's employer, the EC, presented ambitious proposals for the expansion of nuclear energy and seemed totally committed to nuclear power, and thus seemed a suitable candidate. Experts' conferences – such as those mentioned in Kelly's letter – appeared to provide another potential target group. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) – the international organization created in the aftermath of Eisenhower's 1953 Atoms for Peace speech to promote civil uses of nuclear power while precluding the proliferation of nuclear weapons – had initially not even been on

⁵ Ibid. Emphasis in the original.

⁶ Kelly, Petra to Peter Weish, Brussels, 12 December 1974, "in Eile". AGG PKA 1933. Translations here and in the following are mine, JHM.

the activists' radar. It was only by recommendation from the FAO that Kelly started to become aware of the IAEA's pivotal role in this field.⁷

Thirdly, it was, however, clear to the activists that they were facing an uphill battle against business, political and technical elites who refused to listen. Concerns about the security of energy supplies in the wake of the oil crisis (Graf 2010) and the massive political and economic capital invested in nuclear power as the energy of the future created a widely shared pro-nuclear elite consensus throughout the Western world (Joppke 1993, 37-40; Radkau 2011, 228f.).⁸ Governments, business, power companies and official experts tended to treat the arguments of the nuclear critics as irrational fear-mongering. Thus, the main goal of the critics was to create events that could act as a sounding board to win back the public on this issue. Staging conferences and hearings appeared to be the way forward to challenge the pro-nuclear elite consensus. Activists resorted to letter-writing campaigns and demonstrations to voice their dissent and engage policy makers. The ultimate objective was to eventually induce a change of policy.⁹

The goal of this article is to enquire into the history of anti-nuclear protest in Europe in the 1970s in a transnational perspective. Rather than recounting national protest events, or comparing local, regional or national cases, this paper will zoom in on the transnational cooperation between anti-nuclear activists in Europe including their global ties. The central argument of this article is that international organizations (IOs) – notably the EC and the IAEA – as targets of anti-nuclear protest at the international level provided a crucial catalyst for transnational cooperation among anti-nuclear activists. As sociological research on the public sphere has emphasized, public communication requires an addressee to become politically relevant (Eder 2000, 181). In a rather passive role, simply as addressees of protests, IOs facilitated transnational cooperation and exchange among the anti-nuclear activists. Traditionally, historians of international relations have ignored and dismissed IOs as powerless talking shops (Schulz 2012, 211f). It is only very recently that the role of the IOs in shaping international norms and standards has been recognized more widely (Iriye 2002; Staples 2006). The cases discussed in this article demonstrate that IOs also had an important mobilizing effect as targets for transnational protest of societal actors in the 1970s – long before the boom of transnational activism

⁷ Kelly, Petra to International Atomic Energy Agency, Wien, 22 August 1975, Request for list of all publications and films and books published by IAEA on health hazards of radiation. AGG PKA 1913.

⁸ Recent research (see in-text citation) suggests that this elite consensus was more fragile than it seemed to the contemporary activists.

⁹ Leinen, Josef M. Arbeitskreis Umweltschutz, Bilanz der Arbeit 1975, Rundschreiben an alle Landesverbände, BA-Verteiler, alle Kreisverbände, 20.1.1976. *Archive der sozialen Demokratie der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (AdsD)*, Bonn Fond Junge Europäische Föderalisten (JEF) (Box 132 Arbeitskreise Frieden Schüler Umwelt), 1-3.

around IOs that is usually associated with the most recent period of globalization after 1989 (Zürn et al. 2012, 77, 91f).

This paper is divided into five sections. In the second part following this introduction, I will briefly explain my transnational approach and outline the sources on which I am drawing. The third part discusses the state of our knowledge about anti-nuclear protest beyond national borders. The fourth part traces the emerging transnational (network of) cooperation among anti-nuclear activists by analyzing five crucial international protest events where activists met and engaged in transnational exchange and transfer, but also faced major obstacles. A final section will summarize the findings and tell us what we can learn from a transnational perspective.

2. A Transnational Perspective on Anti-Nuclear Protest

The term “transnational” has gone through a veritable boom in historical research since the beginning of the millennium, while its usage has become ever more loose and fuzzy (Gassert 2010). Transnational is not a sophisticated new term that is effectively a synonym for international. While international relations are traditionally defined as interstate relations, i.e. the relations among governments, transnational relations have been defined by political scientists since the 1970s as relations involving non-state or societal actors (Kaiser and Meyer 2010, 2013), at least on one side of the relationship (Nye and Keohane 1971, 332). With its focus on the role of anti-nuclear protest by groups and organizations that have variously been described as civil society (Hasenöhl 2011: 25-31; Kocka 2000) or (new) social movement (DellaPorta 1999; Eder 1985; Offe 1985) organizations, this article adopts a transnational perspective that emphasizes the linkages and the interaction across national societies during a period that is usually considered the heyday of the nation state.

As outlined in the introduction to this HSR Focus (Kirchhof and Meyer 2014), the contributions analyze anti-nuclear protest in the 1970s and 1980s from a transnational perspective, focusing on cross-border interaction and exchange. They enquire into three different aspects. First, they analyze transnational transfers and the diffusion of ideas, including, for example, scientific knowledge or practical knowledge of protest practices. Such transfers – we assume – frequently involve the efforts of transnational mediators and media – including general news media, but also alternative publications – to facilitate the spreading of ideas. Transnational transfers usually also involve the adaptation and integration of these ideas by the recipients (Kaelble 2009; Meyer 2011; Werner and Zimmermann 2006).

Secondly, the contributions analyze – and this is at the centre of this contribution – the establishment of transnational “networks”, namely, structures of frequently informal, but recurrent interaction across national boundaries

(Kaelble et al. 2002; Meyer 2014). Drawing on insights from the analysis of networks in policy making from political science, I analyze informal cooperation and the emergence of network-type informal structures between groups and individuals engaging in this exchange (Kaiser et al. 2010). This concept alerts us to the conditions that facilitate (or hamper) such cooperation, such as the ability to exchange important resources, or the existence or emergence of shared ideas.

Thirdly, the contributions enquire into the idealistic or ideological motivations for transnational action. To what extent were transnational activists motivated by “transnationalism” – i.e. a preference for political action beyond the nation state and transnational cooperation, rooted in traditions of internationalism (Friedemann and Hölscher 1982; Nehring 2005) and European federalist ideas (Burgess 2003; Dedman 2010: 14-29)?

The article draws on published and unpublished materials from the archives of the European institutions in Brussels, British, French and German national archives, as well as interviews with contemporary actors. The archives of the German party foundations proved an important resource: The social democratic Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation in Bonn stores the materials of the Young European Federalists (JEF). The Green Memory Archive (*Archiv Grünes Gedächtnis*) of the *Heinrich Böll Stiftung*, the foundation of the German Green Party, in Berlin provides access to the Petra Kelly Archive, including the personal papers and materials collected by Petra Kelly. This fund provides an exceptionally rich source for the history of transnational anti-nuclear protest, since Kelly was involved in a variety of transnational networks of European (Milder 2014) and global scope (Kirchhof 2014a, b).

3. “Where do we go from Wyhl?” Beyond the National Story

In the story of German anti-nuclear protest, Wyhl – the occupation of the building site of the projected power plant in February 1975 – features prominently. It is considered the birthplace of the German anti-nuclear – if not the entire Green – movement (Rucht 1980) and has been included among the national *lieux de mémoire* (Nora 1989), as a site that reflects the struggle over varying visions of modernity in (West) Germany in the 1970s (Rusinek 2001). The nuclear sites at Fessenheim (Cans 2006, 127f), Zwentendorf (Halbrainer et al. 2008), Windscale (McDermott 2008; Wynne 1982), Kaiseraugst (Kupper 2003) or Seabrook (Hughes 2014) feature similarly prominently in the histories of anti-nuclear protest of France, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Switzerland or the United States, for example. Not only public memory, but also the historiography of anti-nuclear protest has long been characterized by methodological nationalism (Beck 2005). This is remarkable, since some of these histories

of such protest do refer to cross-border exchange. Writing about the Swiss case, Patrick Kupper mentions that the occupiers of the Kaiseraugst building site on 1 April 1975 drew on the example of Wyhl and the French lead foundry at Marckolsheim in nearby Alsace (Kupper 2003, 147). Moreover, he notes that they availed of expertise on the impact of low-level radiation provided by American scientists, including the Gofman, Gofman's long-time cooperation partner Arthur R. Tamplin and Ernest R. Sternglass (Kupper 2003, 122).

Only more recently, as a result of the growing interest in international and global phenomena in environmental history (Iriye 2008; McNeill and Engelke 2013; Worster 2008), some researchers have started to become more interested in transnational exchange in anti-nuclear protest. As indicated in the introductory chapter to this HSR Focus, which situates the emergence of anti-nuclear protest more broadly in the history of modern environmentalism (Kirchhof and Meyer 2014), research so far has largely focused on the Franco-Swiss-German connection along the upper Rhine in the context of the emerging German Green party (Milder 2010a, b). My own research has explored the transnational protest directed at the EC institutions, as an example of the activities of the European Environmental Bureau (EEB), the umbrella organization and Brussels representative of Western Europe's environmental organizations founded in 1974 (Meyer 2013). The goal of this article, however, is to examine the emerging (network of) transnational cooperation among those anti-nuclear activists who tried to take their protest to the international level. I will present which groups and individuals cooperated, why and how they did so, which obstacles they faced and which international bodies they targeted.

4. Emerging Networks of Transnational Cooperation

Recurrent, network-type transnational cooperation among nuclear activists in Europe emerged in the context of protest events and conferences these groups staged in the second half of the 1970s to politicize the nuclear issue. Anti-nuclear groups tried to confront political authorities at different levels of government with their concerns. These events also facilitated important transnational transfers of knowledge, notably, of scientific evidence of the potential dangers of nuclear power. Expertise of this kind proved extremely valuable in the struggle over nuclear energy. In the public controversy, the pro-nuclear side usually claimed superior scientific expertise, while denigrating the arguments of the anti-nuclear side as emotional scare-mongering. This section will trace the emerging network of anti-nuclear activists – and the problems they faced in establishing ties and staging effective action. Based on the assumption that events played a key role in transnational cooperation, the analysis focuses on conferences directed at IOs between 1975 and 1978. In the wake of Wyhl, this was a formative period of transnational cooperation. Apart from events directed

at the Brussels European institutions, the analysis also includes a counter-conference against the IAEA's meeting in Salzburg in 1977. While these events were all organized by different organizations, they involved a core of groups and individual actors, with network ties and overlapping memberships across national borders and organizations.

4.1 Counter-Conference to "Nuclear Energy Maturity", April 1975

On 26-27 April 1975, it was not Petra Kelly, but the *Amis de la Terre*, who organized an anti-nuclear conference and demonstration in Paris against the "Nuclear Energy Maturity" conference in Paris that Kelly had mentioned in her letter to Gofman.¹⁰ After breaking away from the Sierra Club in the United States in 1969, the newly founded environmental NGO Friends of the Earth quickly branched out internationally, forming a transnational network committed to the anti-nuclear cause. The French section *Amis de la Terre* was founded as one of the first branches in July 1970 (Cans 2006, 122f). Since the pioneering protests at Fessenheim in the spring of 1971 and a transnational gathering of anti-nuclear activists in Strasbourg in December 1971 (Radkau 2011, 213), French activists were considered the vanguard of anti-nuclear protest in Europe.

However, the members of the German section of the Young European Federalists (JEF) who had come to Paris to establish ties with French activists, found it difficult to bridge cultural and political differences. Despite the presence of activists from a number of different countries, most French protesters seemed not to be interested in transnational cooperation, not even in verbal support of international solidarity. The German visitors were also irritated by the anti-American anti-capitalist rhetoric among some of the French protesters.¹¹

Impressed with the events at Fessenheim and Wyhl, where Europeans had protested together against nuclear power plants, the West German branch of the JEF, the youth organization of the European Federalist movement, had become interested in environmental issues, notably the problems of nuclear energy, and founded a working group on the environment. Committed to the European Federalist cause and a vision of a borderless Europe, the JEF activists perceived nuclear power as a truly European issue. Nuclear power plants clearly had cross-border impacts. Moreover, energy policy was an area with important EC competences. Reaching out to a European public sphere (Meyer 2010), in

¹⁰ Kelly did write a call for a "Nuclear Energy Insanity Conference" as a "counter-conference" to "Nuclear Energy Maturity" in Paris. It is however unclear whether this call – illustrated with a clip from the cover image of Saint-Exupéry's *Little Prince* – was ever published. Kelly, Petra. 1975. *Action Now! March On Kalkar etc. Toward A European and Global Moratorium on Nuclear Plants*. AGG PKA 2249.

¹¹ Eiardt, Ulrike. Bericht über die Teilnahme an der Manifestation gegen KKW's am 26. April 1975, sowie am Colloque nucléaire et politique, veranstaltet von 'Amis de la Terre' u.a. vom 26.-27. April 1975 in Paris, Freiburg, 1. Mai 1975. *AdsD JEF* (Box 132), 1-3; Editorial 1975.

February 1975, their journal *Forum E* featured a special issue on nuclear power plants, which sold out so quickly that they reprinted it three months later.¹²

Two young members of the JEF at the time played a crucial role in the environmentalist turn of the increasingly left-leaning JEF and the establishment of transnational ties. Petra Kelly, born in Bavaria, but raised and educated in the United States, and Josef M. “Jo” Leinen, raised in the Franco-German borderland in the Sarre region, president of the JEF (1972-1976), and subsequently international secretary of the German Young Socialists, were both important networkers and transnational mediators. Both shared language skills and knowledge of European integration and international politics due to their educational background: in addition to her BA in political science in Washington D. C., Kelly held an MA in European Studies from the University of Amsterdam. After obtaining a German law degree, Leinen graduated from the College of Europe in Bruges, a postgraduate institution founded by ardent European Federalists in 1949 that came to serve as an elite school for the European civil service (Poehls 2009). Subsequently, both Leinen and Kelly became leading members of the Bundesverband Bürgerinitiativen Umweltschutz (BBU), the umbrella organization of the German citizen action groups (Leinen 1995, 47-8; Sattler 1995). However, while Leinen remained faithful to the Social Democrats and became minister of the environment in the Sarre region in the 1980s and later Member of the European Parliament, Kelly left the Social Democrats and became arguably the most well-known figure-heads of the emerging German (and European) Green Party in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Mende 2011; Milder 2010b, 2014; Richter 2010).

Kelly had been alerted to the detrimental effects of radiation by personal experience. She attributed her younger sister’s death of cancer to the radiation Grace’s father had been exposed to in Nagasaki in 1945 (Milder 2010b; Richter 2010, 44, 60f, 251f.). As early as 1974, she set up a foundation in her sister’s memory, and campaigned to improve cancer research, setting up a European database on cancer.¹³ She drew much of her inspiration from debates on the carcinogenic effects of radiation in the US, where these issues were much more controversial than in Europe (Joppke 1993, 27-30; Semendeferi 2008). Collecting materials during her regular trips to the United States to visit her family, she passed on awareness, expertise and knowledge of protest tactics – such as those applied by American environmentalist Ralph Nader – across the Atlantic.¹⁴

The JEF’s working group had ambitious goals: First, – in line with what Kelly had indicated to Gofman in the above-mentioned letter – their aim was to

¹² Leinen, Josef M. 20.01.1976. Arbeitskreis Umweltschutz, Bilanz der Arbeit 1975.

¹³ Kelly, Petra to Josef Leinen “vertraulich, sehr wichtig”, Brussels, 23 October 1974, “tief in der Nacht”. AGG PKA 2249.

¹⁴ Kelly, Petra. Strategie auf europäischer Ebene für Freiburg, JEF-Seminar, Brüssel, 9. Juli 1975. AGG PKA 2249.

take the nuclear issue to the level of IOs. Their objective was to go to Brussels and convince the European institutions to hold public hearings, and to critically engage with the issue for the first time. For this purpose, they intended to start a letter-writing campaign to address leading figures in the EC institutions. Secondly, transnational action directed at IOs needed to be based on transnational cooperation with partners from across national borders within Europe. Thus, the JEF sent representatives to the conference in Paris to collect addresses of potential cooperation partners. Thirdly, they planned to cooperate on “Hearings on Nuclear Power”, which the “transnational socialist” group Agenor intended to hold in Brussels later in 1975. The JEF’s role would be to organize the representation of experts and citizen action groups from Germany.¹⁵

4.2 JEF Conference, Freiburg, July 1975

Throughout 1975, the German JEF section and its local groups engaged in various activities to put their transnational political ambitions into practice, cooperating with local citizen action groups within West Germany and across national borders. For instance, they supported the transnational cooperation between Dutch and West German action groups initiatives protesting against the Fast Breeder at Kalkar in North-Rhine Westphalia.¹⁶

On 11-13 July 1975, the working group on the environment of the JEF went back to the upper Rhine region near Wyhl. In the university town of Freiburg, they organized an “international seminar” on “Nuclear Power. Risk or Progress for European Society”, (*Kernkraft – Risiko oder Fortschritt für die Europäische Gesellschaft*) with participants from five European countries, to prepare for their involvement in the Agenor “Hearings”. Effectively, the conference served two purposes: First, it provided an opportunity to bring together activists and experts and to improve access to information and counter-expertise on the nuclear issue. The JEF invited experts, including natural scientists, from universities and environmental groups to discuss three central issues, namely 1) the dangers of nuclear energy, 2) economic and political aspects of nuclear energy, and finally 3) alternative sources of energy.¹⁷

In addition, Kelly, who was in charge of a final session on opportunities for a “Europe-wide campaign”, sought to facilitate access to further information. She distributed a long list of addresses of nuclear critics, government and scientific institutions across Europe and the United States, from which activists

¹⁵ Leinen, Josef M. Junge Europäische Föderalisten, Protokoll des Arbeitskreises Kernenergie vom 19.4.75 in Brüssel, Bonn, 23. April 1975. *AdsD JEF* (Box 132), 1-2.

¹⁶ Leinen, Josef M. 20.01.1976. Arbeitskreis Umweltschutz, Bilanz der Arbeit 1975.

¹⁷ Junge Europäische Föderalisten, Arbeitskreis Kernenergie. Internationales Seminar Kernenergie. Risiko oder Fortschritt für die Europäische Gesellschaft, 11-13 July 1975, Kolpinghaus, Freiburg. AGG PKA 2249, 1-2.

could obtain information.¹⁸ In order to disseminate this information on nuclear issues beyond the limited group of the participants of the conference, the JEF made very effective use of its journal *Forum Europa*,¹⁹ publishing a special issue in 1976 on the social and political implications of nuclear power. This special issue (1976b) included contributions of experts who had attended the Freiburg seminar and the Agenor hearings. Furthermore, in the final section of the issue, the editors listed the addresses of anti-nuclear groups throughout Western and Northern Europe and the United States, as well as publications and even records of protest songs (1976a).

Secondly, the conference served to engage in actual political action directed at both the international and the national levels. In the session she was in charge of, Kelly made detailed proposals for a transnational letter-writing campaign to address the European (EC) institutions, including a list of the names and addresses of European Commissioners, leading officials, the Economic and Social Committee (her employer), the Council of Ministers and the Permanent Representations of the member states, the European Parliament and the European Investment Bank that helped financing nuclear power plants.²⁰ At the end of 1975, the JEF counted this letter writing campaign, which had started in Freiburg, as a major success. The European institutions had actually responded to these letters.²¹ Apart from the transnational campaign, the JEF also took their action to the national level. Taking their protests to Bonn, Jo Leinen and his fellow protesters managed to get an opportunity to have discussions with the social-democratic Federal Minister for Research Hans Matthöfer.²² Matthöfer was willing to engage with the critics, since he attributed the opposition to and fears about nuclear energy to a lack of comprehensive information and rational debate about the issues at stake (Matthöfer 1976a). Indeed, in West Germany, Matthöfer organized a well-publicized series of public hearings (*Bürgerdialog Kernenergie*) (Matthöfer 1976b, 1977).

4.3 Agenor Conference, Brussels, November 1975

Named after the father of the young woman “Europa” from Greek mythology, Agenor was a group and journal that emerged from the movement for the unification of Western Europe, but aimed at a “European political system fundamentally different from the existing Community: a socialist and democratic Community” (Agenor 1975-76, 2). It arose among the alumni of the College of Europe. As a result of the “impact of 1968” (Agenor 1975-76, 5) – the group

¹⁸ Kelly, Petra. Strategie auf europäischer Ebene für Freiburg, JEF-Seminar, 9. Juli 1975.

¹⁹ The JEF's journal *Forum E* was renamed *Forum Europa* from 1976 onwards, due to a copyright conflict.

²⁰ Kelly, Petra. Strategie auf europäischer Ebene für Freiburg, JEF-Seminar, 9. Juli 1975.

²¹ Leinen, Josef M. Arbeitskreis Umweltschutz, Bilanz der Arbeit 1975, 20.1.1976.

²² Ibid.

took a clear political stance on the left, while remaining formally independent of any political party.

This group aimed at organizing public “hearings” in Brussels, to take the controversy over nuclear energy to the European institutions in Brussels. The organizers argued that the European institutions had simply accepted the nuclear option, without addressing the concerns and protests in a “European public sphere”, such as at “Wyhl” and “Kaiseraugst”.²³ Issues such as the effects of radiation on human health, genetic damage, and the problems relating to reprocessing or nuclear waste, had not adequately been discussed at the European level, Agenor criticized. Furthermore, the political parties in Europe had failed to critically engage with, and simply accepted the “propaganda” of the nuclear lobby.²⁴ The goal of the hearings was thus to open up an opportunity for debate in Brussels on four central issues:

- 1) “Radioactivity Risks in the Fuel Cycle”,
- 2) “Impact on the Environment”,
- 3) “Energy Economics and Alternatives” and
- 4) “Political and Ethical Issues”.²⁵

At the hearings, representatives of the advocates and critics of nuclear energy were to present their views in front of a panel of public figures and an audience consisting of “journalists, [trade] unionists, MPs, members of citizen action groups”. Of course, the results of the discussion were to be presented to the media to insert the nuclear issue in the European public sphere.²⁶

In their commitment to both (a different version of) European integration and the anti-nuclear cause, JEF and Agenor had a very similar ideological base. Key members were actually part of both groups. Living and working in Brussels, Kelly was an active member of the Agenor group, attending their Wednesday meetings.²⁷ Among others, Kelly, Leinen and Agenor’s editor in Brussels, John Lambert – an English freelance journalist with excellent German language skills – played a central role in organizing this event, notably inviting the expert “witnesses”. This proved more difficult than anticipated, for a variety of practical reasons.

²³ Remarkably, Kelly – committed to transnationalism – did not distinguish between power plants located in the EC (Wyhl) and in non-EC Switzerland (Kaiseraugst).

²⁴ Agenor. 1913. Europäische Kernenergie-Hearings, Brüssel, 5.-8. November 1975, organisiert von dem Agenor Team. “Warum wollen wir Europäische Kernenergie ‘Hearings’ abhalten”. AGG PKA.

²⁵ Agenor. 1913. Europäische Hearings und Arbeitsgruppen über Atomenergie, Brüssel, 5.-8. November 1975, veranstaltet von Agenor. AGG PKA.

²⁶ Agenor. Europäische Kernenergie-Hearings, Brüssel, 5.-8. November 1975.

²⁷ See handwritten note on: Junge Europäische Föderalisten, Arbeitskreis Kernenergie. Internationales Seminar Kernenergie. Risiko oder Fortschritt für die Europäische Gesellschaft, vom 11-13 Juli 1975, 7800 Freiburg, Kolpinghaus, Programm. AGG PKA 2249, 1-2.

First, even if Agenor was well-connected – and, notably, Kelly had established a wide range of contacts also across the Atlantic – transnational communication was complicated and cumbersome. Two decades before the arrival of the fax machine and the internet, international letters and responses took a long time, and phone calls and telegrams were forbiddingly expensive. The delays in communication this involved were aggravated by Agenor's funding problems. For instance, by the time Agenor had secured an airline ticket for John Gofman to come to Brussels, he had allocated his time differently.²⁸

Secondly, anti-nuclear groups in Brussels did not necessarily cooperate, but rather competed for attention. On 23 November, the Belgian anti-nuclear association *Survie-Belgique* held their First World Antinuclear Conference of Brussels (*Premier Congrès Universel Antinucléaire de Bruxelles*).²⁹ It was this event – rather than the Agenor hearings – that Gofman and Tamplin eventually committed to attend.³⁰ Maurice André, the organizer of the World Antinuclear Conference, was not willing to work with Agenor. Lambert and Agenor lacked the necessary track-record of previous anti-nuclear action, André complained in a letter to the JEF.³¹

Finally, it proved hard to win participants from the pro-nuclear side.³² In the event, the European Commissioner responsible for energy, Henri Simonet, did not show up, even though he had promised to attend. It was only due to the intervention of Matthöfer's ministry that Agenor had been able to include experts for the sessions on health risks and energy economics (Agenor 1976, 2).

Despite these problems, the hearings offered an opportunity to present the anti-nuclear case in Brussels. Experts (or “witnesses”) from nine different European countries and the United States presented their views – including the well-known and controversial American nuclear critic Sternglass.³³ With its informal working groups, the event provided plenty of opportunities to establish and strengthen informal transnational ties among a great variety of anti-nuclear and environmental groups from Western Europe. Participants included

²⁸ Gofman, John to Petra Kelly, Brussels, 27 September 1975. AGG PKA 2119.

²⁹ Scampi, Paolo. 2008. *History of the AIPRI (Association Internationale pour la Protection contre les Rayons Ionisants)*. <<http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2008/07/30/18521026.php>>. (accessed 15 December 2013).

³⁰ Tamplin, Arthur R., Natural Resources Defense Council, Inc., Washington, to Drs. Petra Karin Kelly, Wirtschafts- und Sozialausschuss, Brussels, 11 July 1975. AGG PKA 1913; Gofman, John to Petra Kelly, 27 September 1975.

³¹ André, Maurice to Junge Europäische Föderalisten, 22 July 1975. AGG PKA 2249.

³² Kelly, Petra to John W. Gofman, Confidential, Brussels, 27 August 1975. AGG PKA 2119.

³³ Sternglass, Ernest to Petra Kelly, Pittsburgh, PA, 3 July 1975. AGG PKA 1969. While providing Kelly with Sternglass' address, the UN in New York questioned Sternglass' scientific credentials. Sella, Francesco, Secretary of the Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, United Nations, to Petra Kelly, New York, 11 September 1974. AGG PKA 1969.

– apart from a considerable number of trade unionists³⁴ – representatives of Friends of the Earth from different countries, and the European Environmental Bureau (EEB), the umbrella organization of Europe's environmentalist, which also included the JEF. Various local citizen action groups, well-connected individual activists like Konradin Kreuzer from Switzerland, who produced a newsletter on nuclear issues,³⁵ and the leader of the German federation of citizen action groups (BBU) Hans-Helmuth Wüstenhagen also joined the event.³⁶ A large number of these individuals and groups also attended the various other events discussed in this article.

4.4 Salzburg Conference on a Non-Nuclear Future, April/May 1977

The “Salzburg Conference on a Non-nuclear Future” (Patterson 1977), held in the picturesque Austrian city of Salzburg, 29 April-1 May 1977, differed in various respects from the events discussed above. First, it took place in Austria, which was not a member state of the EC until after the end of the cold war (Gehler 2004), and was located on the margins of Western Europe. At the same time, Austrian activists and experts were very involved in transnational anti-nuclear networks in Europe. The main local organizer of the conference, biologist Peter Weish from Vienna, for instance, had been one of the experts at the Agenor Hearings in Brussels. He was regularly invited to speak as an anti-nuclear expert across Europe.³⁷

Secondly, the Salzburg conference was directed not at the European, but at the global level. As Austria was a small and neutral country, its capital Vienna was home to IOs of a global scope, notably the United Nation's organization responsible for (the promotion of) nuclear energy, the IAEA. Like the conference organized by the *Amis de la Terre* in Paris, the Salzburg conference was a

³⁴ As an official of the EC's Economic and Social Committee (ESC), Kelly was regularly in touch with trade union leaders from all over Europe, who were represented in the ESC, along with the employers. The trade union movement was divided on the issue of nuclear power. John Carroll from the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, a member of the panel, was one of the most pronounced anti-nuclear trade unionists. Kelly, Petra to John W. Gofman, Brussels, 3 June 1976. AGG PKA 2119.

³⁵ Kreuzer, Konradin to Petra Kelly, Brussels, Flüh, CH, 7 January 1976, “Thank you note after Agenor Conference”. AGG PKA 1954. Kreuzer, Konradin. Querverbindungen über die Landesgrenzen. Salzburger Konferenz für eine nicht-nukleare Zukunft. *nntele. Querverbindung von Land zu Land zwischen Aufbaukräften einer nicht-nuklearen Zukunft/Gegenwart*. Originalausgabe (0-Nummer, August 1977), 1-2. AGG PKA 3176 (emphasis in the original, JHM)."

³⁶ Agenor. Europäische Hearings und Arbeitsgruppen über Atomenergie, Brüssel, 5.-8. November 1975, veranstaltet von Agenor. AGG PKA 1913.

³⁷ Ibid; Interview with Peter Weish, Munich, 22 August 2013.

counter-conference, directed against the IAEA conference on “Nuclear Power and the Fuel Cycle” in the same city.³⁸

Thirdly, the transnational network of organizations sponsoring this conference was equally of global scope. It included the Austrian Conservation Society (*Österreichischer Naturschutzbund*), the European Environmental Bureau (EEB), Friends of the Earth International, Gensuikin (Japan Congress Against A- and H-Bombs) and the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) from the United States. American leadership played an important role in the organization of the event. The initiative for the event came from the NRDC, a highly professional advocacy group formed by young lawyers in New York in 1970. Based in Washington, D. C., NRDC activist S. Jacob Scherr was the key organizer on the American side. He cooperated closely with Peter Weish, Freda Meissner-Blau and Artur Sikora from the Austrian Conservation Society, the Austrian local organizers.³⁹ In advance of the conference, Scherr travelled to Europe, visiting activists all across the continent. Despite its global thrust, the event involved those European groups and individuals who were part of the anti-nuclear network that had evolved in the meantime, a network in which the EEB and Friends of the Earth played a central role, but also included JEF and Agenor. This network was reinforced by multiple and overlapping memberships of key individuals in the different groups. Moreover, Petra Kelly also tried to use the presence of international experts in Europe to target the EC, offering to arrange information meetings with officials in Brussels.⁴⁰

Fourthly, much more so than the previous events, the Salzburg meeting was a conference of experts. Clearly, the organizers aimed at matching the IAEA’s conference by assembling counter-expertise (Topcu 2008) at the highest international level, and facilitating transnational transfers of relevant scientific evidence. By providing a conference package including printed versions of most of the statements, the conference offered ample material for the participants to take home. Based on statements by the participants, the conference started out with an overview of the nuclear debate in the different countries. Expert reports covered issues the same issues as previous events – notably the economics of nuclear energy, alternative energy futures, and health and environmental risks. In addition, they included issues that had emerged more recently, such as nuclear proliferation and the consequences of the breeder and reprocessing technologies. Despite the conference’s focus on science and expertise, the organizers also foresaw a session on “Public Participation in Energy

³⁸ Weish, Peter, et al. 1977. Introduction to The Salzburg Conference for a Non-Nuclear Future, 29 April to 1 May 1977, Cammer der Gewerbliche[n] Wirtschaft, Salzburg, Austria [schedule and documentation]. AGG PKA 3176.

³⁹ Interview with Peter Weish.

⁴⁰ Kelly, Petra. Possible Visitors on 28 April 1977, Information Note to Mr. Kuby, Mr. McLaughlin, Mr. Vermeylen, Mr. Deasy, Mr. Barry-Braunthal, Brussels, 5 April 1977. AGG PKA 1954.

Decision-Making: NGO Tactics and Strategies”, thus providing an opportunity to discuss and diffuse information on protest practices.⁴¹ Moreover, the conference produced a resolution addressing the IAEA and demanding a change of policy.⁴²

The extent to which the Salzburg Conference for a Non-Nuclear Future and this resolution had an impact on the IAEA is difficult to establish. The archival records of the IAEA show, however, that its director general closely followed the activities of the anti-nuclear activists in Austria and internationally.⁴³ That the IAEA considered the anti-nuclear activists a problem can be taken from one of the papers presented at the IAEA conference.⁴⁴ Local and international media covered the conference, alongside the IAEA event.⁴⁵ In any case, the event facilitated transnational debate among activists and transfers of expertise at a global scale.

4.5 Open Debates on Nuclear Energy – Brunner Hearings, November 1977 / January 1978

When the new European Commissioner for energy, the German liberal Guido Brunner presented his plans to organize the “Open Debate on Nuclear Energy” on behalf of the Commission at a press conference on 3 February 1977, he not only fulfilled one of the core demands of the JEF’s letter writing campaigns, which had called upon the European institutions to open up to the public controversy on the nuclear issue. Brunner also responded to recommendations and advice that John Lambert provided to him, on the basis of the lessons drawn from the Agenor Hearings of 1975. Lambert recommended the same set-up, with experts and a panel, a similar range of issues, and the publication of the debates, and suggested that the Commission was in a much better position to win participants from both sides than Agenor had been. Lambert also suggested leaving the selection of the critics to the EEB.⁴⁶ These were of course not the only sources of inspiration for the holding of public hearings. Indeed, Brunner

⁴¹ Weish, Peter, et al. The Salzburg Conference for a Non-Nuclear Future, 29 April to 1 May 1977.

⁴² Declaration of the Salzburg Conference for a Non-Nuclear Future. AGG PKA 3176.

⁴³ I would like to thank Christian Forstner, Jena, for pointing this out to me.

⁴⁴ Matthews, R. R., and E. F. Ulsher. CEGB (Central Electricity Generating Board) Experience of Public Communication. IAEA-CN-36/59 (V). Paper presented at the IAEA International Conference on Nuclear Energy and its Fuel Cycle, Salzburg, 1977. *National Archive, London* AB 48/1565, 1-8.

⁴⁵ Fonds für abgesprungene Atomgelehrte. Vorschlag Robert Jungks auf der Salzburger Konferenz für Kernenergiefreie Zukunft. *Salzburger Nachrichten*, 30 April 1977; Tucker, Anthony. 1977. The Salzburg game of nuclear poker (newspaper article). AGG PKA 3176.

⁴⁶ Lambert, John. For Guido Brunner: Thoughts on Commission Hearings about Energy Policy, Group Agenor, Brussels, 25 January 1977. *Historical Archives of the European Commission (HAEC)* BAC 144/1987 254, 84-6.

transferred to the Brussels level an instrument to defuse the nuclear conflict that was practiced all over Europe, including Matthöfer's *Bürgerdialog* mentioned above.

When presenting his plans to his fellow Commissioners for approval in June 1975, Brunner pointed to three main reasons for holding the hearings: first, to contribute to informing the public on the problems of nuclear energy, taking into account the energy needs of the Community; secondly, to ensure the EC's participation in the debate on nuclear energy; and finally, to help define priority areas for research on nuclear energy that might prove necessary.⁴⁷ This justification may seem very bureaucratic, reflecting a top-down concept of communication, namely, informing the public about what is necessary. The eventual hearings that took place at the exhibition center at Heysel in Brussels from 29 November to 1 December 1977, and from 24 to 26 January 1978, however included the main issues of controversy, despite the emphasis on economic issues that the session titles suggest. The first session addressed "Energy needs and supplies for the rest of the century. The role of nuclear energy", the second one "Economic growth and energy options. Implications for safety, health and environmental protection." An originally planned session on ethical issues was integrated into the second session, apparently for budgetary reasons.⁴⁸

The so-called Brunner hearings mark a departure from previous protest events. While the latter had been organized by the activists to challenge the EC, the Commission itself organized these hearings. Thus, the European Commission apparently took the popular concerns seriously for the first time. This was a substantial success for the transnational networks of anti-nuclear activists. First, it implied that the EC was now willing to engage with views from society and to at least discuss the previously unquestioned pro-nuclear consensus. Secondly, the Commission also recognized the Brussels-based European environmental umbrella organization EEB – a core member of the transnational network – as a legitimate representative of the anti-nuclear cause. As Lambert had suggested, they invited the EEB to select the anti-nuclear voices for the Commission's hearings. In their conclusions from the hearing, the Commission not only took up some of the activists' criticism, by promising to strengthen research on alternative sources of energy. They also promised to consult the

⁴⁷ European Commission, Secretariat General. Debats publics sur l'énergie nucléaire au niveau des Communautés. Communication de M. Brunner, Brussels, 17 June 1977, SEC (77) 2336, O. J. 435/2 point 22, 1-7, *HAEC*. The record of the discussion among the Commissioners on this item is missing from the verbatim records of the Commission meetings at the Historical Archives of the European Commission in Brussels.

⁴⁸ Brunner, Guido, European Commission to Louis-Paul Suetens, President of the EEB, 11 November 1977. *HAEC* BAC 144 1985 250, 52.

EEB regularly in the future.⁴⁹ This, of course, did not amount to a change in policy.

In any case, by providing a meeting place for transnational anti-nuclear activists – many of whom had met before, for instance in Salzburg, the Brunner hearings contributed to reinforcing and institutionalizing global transnational cooperation. Meeting in Brussels on 28 November, the day before the hearings started, activists from different parts of the world agreed on the plans to establish a “World Information Service on Energy (WISE)” to coordinate activities and to distribute information via a regular newsletter.⁵⁰ These plans had been developed by a working group including Agenor’s John Lambert and Nina Gladitz, a German film-maker, who shot documentaries on Wyhl and uranium mining in Australia – the latter together with Jo Leinen (Kirchhof 2014a),⁵¹ as well as Siegfried Christiansen from the Danish *Organisationen til Oplysning om Atomkraft* (OOA, Organization for Nuclear Information). This organization, which held the copyright to the anti-nuclear sun symbol “Nuclear energy – no thanks”, was willing to offer a certain percentage share of their proceeds to fund the new transnational body.⁵²

5. Conclusions

What do these episodes of transnational anti-nuclear protest against the pro-nuclear policy of international organizations in the 1970s tell us about the history of anti-nuclear protest in Europe in the 1970s and 1980s more generally? What is the added value of taking a transnational perspective?

First, while previous social science and historical research suggests that anti-nuclear activists in the 1970s and 1980s primarily addressed local and national authorities, adapting to the opportunities these institutions provided, this article demonstrates that representatives of a number of key anti-nuclear groups from

⁴⁹ EEB. 1978. Response to the Communication on the Conclusions drawn by the Commission from the Public Debates on Nuclear Energy, Brussels, 14 July 1978. *HAEC BAC 144 1985 250, 75-7*; European Commission. 1978. *Conclusions drawn by the Commission from the Public Debates on Nuclear Energy. Communication from the Commission to the Council. COM (78) 129 final and COM (78) 129 final/2, 31 March 1978*. <<http://aei.pitt.edu/8942/>>. (accessed 3 January 2014).

⁵⁰ World Information Service on Energy (WISE). *WISE Bulletin No. 1 May 1978*. <<http://www.10.antenna.nl/wise/b1/b1-1.pdf>>. (accessed 20 December 2013).

⁵¹ Leinen, Josef M. 8 June 1978. To Petra Kelly. AGG PKA 2249.

⁵² Christiansen, Siegfried, *Organisationen til Oplysning om Atomkraft* (OOA), to the participants in The Salzburg Conference for a non-nuclear future, 29 April-1 May 1977 and the World Congress against Nuclear Power, Gothenburg, 13-16 May 1976, Copenhagen, 11 January 1978. AGG PKA 3176; OOA. *Transnationaler Energie-Informationsdienst mit Geld von der lachenden Sonne. An alle Bürgerinitiativen gegen Atomkraftwerke*, Copenhagen, 14. Dezember 1977. AGG PKA 3176.

Europe and overseas directed their protest at the international level. They targeted those IOs involved in the promotion of nuclear power, such as the EC and the IAEA. This is an interesting finding, since transnational protest against IOs is usually associated with the advent of globalization in the 1990s.

Secondly, while local transnational protest at Wyhl inspired many of the activists involved in transnational interaction, as it resonated with their transnationalism and European federalist ideas, protest directed at the international level acted as a catalyst strengthening transnational cooperation. Protest events against IO's pro-nuclear policies provided important meeting places for the groups and activists involved and facilitated the formation of informal transnational networks. In the 1970s, this did not amount to a broad-based transnational social movement. Only a very small minority of the anti-nuclear activists actually engaged in transnational cooperation. The obstacles to transnational cooperation were considerable: collaborating across borders usually required foreign language skills, time and (access to) resources for international travel and communication, as well as organizational and intercultural skills. A small number of internationally trained individuals with great political ambitions, such as Petra Kelly, for instance, played a key role in transnational exchange, building up network ties with experts and activists across borders and across continents. As transnational mediators, they also facilitated transnational transfers of scientific (counter-) expertise, such as on the effects of low-level radiation, as well as information on protest tactics, thus strengthening anti-nuclear movements across borders. Ideological commitments to internationalism and European federalism, shared by groups such as Agenor and the JEF, seem to have been a key motivation for some of the groups and individuals most actively involved in transnational cooperation.

Thirdly, recurrent transnational cooperation among a relatively small group of individuals at a series of protest events in the mid-1970s seems to have created a dynamic of transnational network formation and institutionalization. Activists quickly realized the limits of informal exchange, and started to establish institutions to facilitate transnational cooperation and transfers of information, such the World Information Service on Energy (WISE). Subsequently in the early 1980s, these transnational networks not only engaged in protest, but also attempted to act more constructively, promoting new, alternative sources of energy.⁵³

Fourthly, we may ask whether transnational interaction actually made a difference. Clearly, transnational protest did not lead to immediate policy change in the EC or the IAEA. This is hardly surprising, given that both institutions were legally committed to the promotion of nuclear power. At the same time, these protests clearly challenged the technocratic consensus, and led these IOs

⁵³ Silva, Mayra, Citizens' Energy Project, to Petra Kelly, BBU [1981]. AGG PKA 1972.

to take the concerns of the critics more seriously, given their resonance in a transnational public sphere. Furthermore, by exploring the relations between NGOs and IOs in a transnational perspective, these findings contribute to the emerging field of research on the role of IOs in the emerging policy area of the environment (Borowy 2014; Kaiser and Meyer forthcoming 2015; Schulz 2010; Schulz-Walden 2013; Wöbse 2011).

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